

TOP SALES

JANUARY 2020

MAGAZINE

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

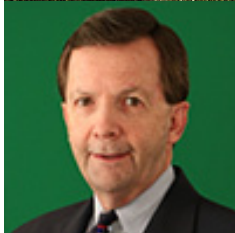
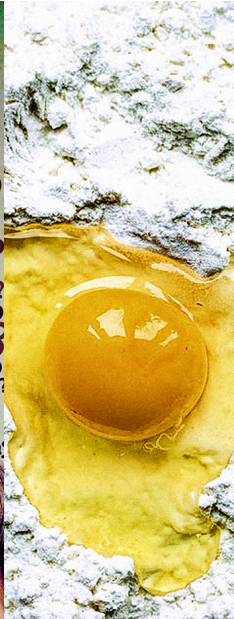
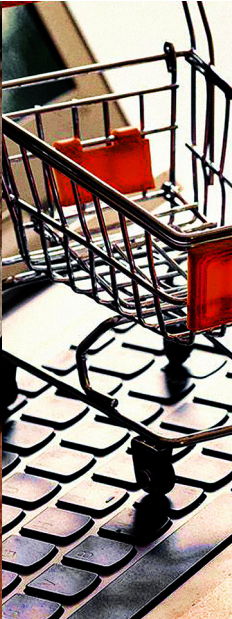
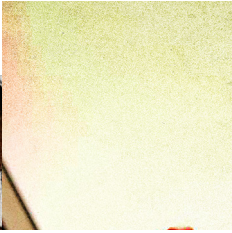
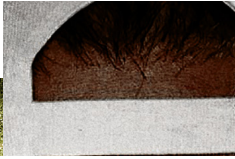
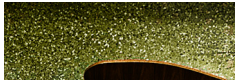
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Barbara Weaver Smith
Barb Giamanco
Deb Calvert
Jim Cathcart
Steve Hall
Ron Greenberg
& Dan Weinfurter
Dr. Tony Alessandra
Joanne S. Black

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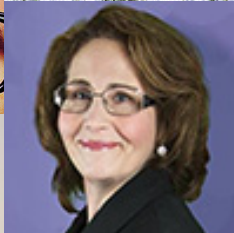
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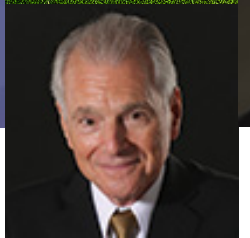
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2019
Top Sales Post
PAGE 37

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A JF INITIATIVE





THE ANNUAL TOP SALES AWARDS 2019

This annual contest was created nine years ago to hail the “best of breed” within the sales and marketing space; to laud those companies and individuals who have gone that extra mile; who have been unafraid to challenge paradigms and who have had the courage to pioneer, when others remained wedded to the status quo. 2019 was another exciting year and all of our medallists demonstrated to our expert judging panel that they won through not solely because of the excellence of their product offerings and creative work, but also because they wanted success badly enough ... they wanted to win.

Here then are the winners in each of the ten categories.
For more details and to check out all of the medallists, [please go here](#)



Post



Assessment Tools



Sales Book



Company Blog



eBook/
White Paper



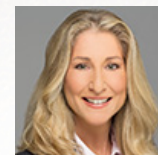
Individual Blog



Podcast



Sales Enablement Technology



Video



Webinar



TOP SALES WORLD
A JF INITIATIVE

2020 Columnists

Our regular columnists provide thought-provoking commentary on the hot topics that are the most relevant and indeed, the most significant. Plus we have a [world-class team of feature writers](#) who also contribute regularly.



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Global Growth & Innovation
Evangelist, Salesforce



[DEB CALVERT](#)

President, People First
Productivity Solutions



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[DANIEL WEINFURTER](#)

Director at
Mentor Group UK.



The More You Focus on Selling, The Less You Will Sell



Back in the 1980s and 1990s, salespeople were taught a very specific method of selling. The environment was such that the salesperson held the power. Consumers, including company purchasing professionals, did not have easy access to information about the products and services they needed.

There was no easy way to gain insight into new products or upgrades to existing machines, equipment, or processes. The buyer was at the mercy of the salesperson, so salespeople were taught to develop a sales 'pitch' and strategy that could convince someone they needed or wanted the product or service being sold. The more persuasive they could be, the more likely they were to make the sale.

Sometimes that persuasion came across as pushy or coercive. The buyer felt like they were being talked into something or bullied into buying. This is how buyer's remorse happens. When someone is talked into buying something they're not convinced they need or want, or can afford, they then end up feeling bad about the purchase – and the salesperson.

In 1992, the movie *Glengarry Glen Ross* hit the movie theatres. It became an iconic depiction of the sales industry. "Always Be Closing" became a mantra. Salespeople were trained to always be thinking about the sale. They looked at everyone they met as a prospect. Enter the 'elevator pitch.' This idea was developed around the same time. In short, the idea behind the elevator pitch or commercial, was that a salesperson should be able to spark interest in a total stranger in the time it takes to ride an elevator with them. Salespeople were encouraged to strike up conversations with people in line at the grocery store, at the barber, at school functions. No place was off limits. The focus was ALWAYS be closing.

There is an argument to be made that this thought process was successful back then because

the salesperson was in the driver's seat. I'm not so sure that was the case, though. I think it took a certain type of person to be able to pull that sort of thing off. Many people who tried to become salespeople failed miserably. They just couldn't talk someone into buying from them. It's no wonder that the word 'salesman' developed a negative connotation. Being a salesperson was far less than noble. So, one could question whether Always Be Closing was ever a successful mindset.

Thankfully, once the internet became a household presence, it also quickly became a significant part of the buying and selling process. Now, consumers would have the opportunity to learn about the products and services available to them, not just rely on a pitch from the salesperson. Consumers could now research the companies as well. The seller no longer had the upper hand. Now it had shifted to the consumer. Whether or not Always Be Closing was a successful tactic in the 80's and 90's, it had suddenly become not only ineffective but in fact harmful.

Today the ABCs of sales are: **Always Be Curious.** When we lead with the premise that the more you think about selling, the less you'll sell, we can see that choosing curiosity over convincing is the way to go. When we are curious we are thinking about someone else. We aren't concerned with ourselves, our mortgage or our payroll. We want to genuinely learn about the other person, the company, the situation. There is so much that is good about being curious. First of all, it relieves us of the feeling that we should be the one talking. Because in actuality, the opposite is true. We should be listening. And you can't be listening if your lips are moving!

Next, this approach allows us to be present and in the moment. When we are actively listening, we will become more attentive, interested, and engaged. The beauty of all of that is that other people will now want to be around us! When we are curious, we are building relationships. We're discovering not only the problem we might be able to solve, but who the person/company is; how do

they show up? Do they have integrity? Are our values aligned? Are they difficult to deal with or easy to communicate with? All of these things are important.

Think about it this way – when you bring on a new client or customer, you are, in essence, marrying them. Face it, you're going to be in a long-term relationship with them. So, are they someone you want to deal with every day? Will the marriage be joyful, or will it be unpleasant? The only way to really know is to learn about them. When you are curious, you're open to seeing all of the signs, especially the non-verbal ones. Then you can realistically determine if there is an opportunity to help them.

Additionally, when we're curious we're not assuming everyone we meet is a potential customer. But, just the opposite. We're wondering how, and if, they fit into our world. Will they be a resource, a sounding board, a mentor, a partner, a client? Or will they be none of these?

Curiosity means we aren't jumping to conclusions; we aren't making assumptions. And we aren't trying to make someone a client or customer just because we need one. Another wonderful thing about Always Be Curious, is that it takes away the pressure to be persuasive. Heck, it removes any expectation that you're going to do all the talking!

Remember when I said sales should be enjoyable? Well, what is more enjoyable than learning something new, or making a new acquaintance? Sales becomes enjoyable when we stop selling. ■

This is an extract from Diane's new book *"Succeed without Selling"* which is due to be published in the Spring. Diane Helbig is an international business and leadership change agent, author, award-winning speaker, and podcast, and web TV channel host. As president of [Seize This Day](#), Diane helps businesses and organizations operate more constructively and profitably.



JF's 2020 Vision



Tiffani Bova, Innovation Evangelist at Salesforce , Business Anthropologist , Storyteller , WSJ Bestselling Author ,

Thinkers50 interviews Jonathan Farrington.

TB: So, JF, I know that you are dying to share with us what you have up your sleeve for 2020 but before you do, can I ask what your Top Sales highlights were in 2019?

JF: Yes, of course, Tiff. It was, however one wishes to measure it, a “stonking” year – that’s a quaint English term which means “jolly good!”

To begin with, we celebrated Top Sales thirteenth birthday by restructuring and we brought our three initiatives – Top Sales World, Top Sales Magazine and Top Sales Futurists – under the JF Initiatives umbrella, each with their own autonomous locations.

In terms of what we actually delivered during the

course of the year, unfortunately, there isn’t enough space here, but we have listed our achievements for 2019 on [P21](#)

TB: It’s very impressive JF! Your most recent launch was the Top Sales Futurists, will you share your motivation to create this with the readers?

JF: As you certainly understand, the information, advice and commentary that senior management looks for and needs is completely different to that which frontline sales professionals require. A resident of the C-Lounge has no interest in prospect attraction, referral selling, cold calling, closing or questioning techniques, for example. What they do want to listen to or read is what is coming next. They are excited to learn more about Customer Experience Management, Sales Enablement, Digital Transformation, AI etc.

As a consequence, it made complete sense – to me anyway – to create a separate location to cater for those needs. We have gathered together 24 of the world’s leading sales thought leaders, (including you, of course) all of whom are passionate about the future of professional selling. We have joined forces

to share our experience and wisdom, providing advice and opinion via a blog, whitepapers, eBooks, podcasts, webinars, regular newsletters and monthly Roundtables. Each one brings a level of experience and considerable success in their chosen field – some have more than one area of specialization, which can only be an added bonus for our visitors/subscribers.

TB: It is very innovative and at the vanguard, as usual, JF. OK, before we move on to your plans for 2020, you took up a new role as Director of Research for Sandler at the start of 2019, presumably, you had too much spare time on your hands?

JF: Not exactly! For several years I have, like most people who work in and care for the sales industry, become increasingly alarmed at the deterioration in quota achievement levels and I have become determined to discover what on earth is going on. Working with the highly experienced and committed team over at SRC (Sandler Research Center) affords me the opportunity to do that in a much more formal and structured way. Our primary objective from day one has been to roll back the covers, look under the carpet, check the back yard, in fact leave no stone unturned in search of the answers we need, in order to provide our respondents with the information they need to become the best they can. We are delivering actionable and implementable advice and recommendations, and not simply regurgitating facts and figures. You will have identified my enthusiasm for this project and I am very excited about what we are going to deliver in 2020.

TB: OK, let's move on to your 2020 vision for Top Sales, shall we?

JF: Fundamentally, I see no reason to make wholesale changes to Top Sales World or Top Sales Magazine, but we will certainly be adding more contributors to TSW as there are so many terrific commentators out there who have been patiently knocking on the door and it really is time we let them

in. We will also increase the number of regular magazine columnists.

However, what will consume most of next year for the team here is the creation of Top Sales Library. Initially, our plan was to give it its own home but many of my closest friends and trusted advisors believe that the best place for it is in the bosom of Top Sales World.

The Library, as you might envisage, will contain shelves stacked with every conceivable resource that could possibly be required, so that's articles, webinars, videos, white papers, eBooks, podcasts etc. They will all be neatly categorized into thirty- six sections with everything from sales management to lead generation, from enterprise selling to negotiation, from ... I think you get the picture?

The reality is that there are very good resource locations where one can find lots of information but nothing on this scale. My ambition is for this to become THE go-to repository for world-class advice.

I also intend to fully develop the Top Sales Futurists concept. We are not going to expand the team beyond the 24 members, but we will come more to the fore and certainly host far more events in 2020.

TB: Exciting times, JF! Anything else to add?

JF: Just to thank you for allocating the time to conduct this interview, as I know how challenging your schedule is; I am incredibly grateful for our friendship.

And thank you to all the Top Sales partners, contributors, columnists, panellists and of course my team here at Camp JFI, it is an immense honor and privilege to know you and work with you. ■

Jonathan Farrington is the CEO of JF Initiatives. You will find his personal site [here](#) Jonathan is also Director of Research at the [Sandler Research Center](#) You can connect with Jonathan on LinkedIn [here](#)



Account Growth through Opportunity-Solving!



No, you didn't misread the title. It didn't slip by the editing team as a glaring mistake. For opportunity-solving is

both a process and an art that dramatically increases the likelihood of success in selling to and serving major accounts.

Let's begin by thinking about brainstorming, the well-known creative problem-solving technique that takes many different forms. Its genesis is credited to a US advertising executive, Alex Osborn, whose books, *Applied Imagination* and *Think Up*, detailed the teaming approach he used to win business with clients like Goodrich, General Electric, Chrysler and DuPont. He figured out that in maneuvering through the swamp of problems in winning and growing enterprise accounts, having a

creative process would be a significant competitive advantage. As he often said about collaboration in problem-solving, "It's easier to tone down a wild idea than to think up a new one!". How can you not love that thinking?

Of course, in today's collaborative world, the team selling that's so fundamental in working with major accounts, sets the stage for group problem-solving. That's fortunate, because enterprise clients have a right to expect that you address their issues quickly. And since major accounts typically account for 80% of a selling organization's business, they've earned that right.

But solving problems is just one of the challenges in selling to and serving major accounts. For they are vast ecosystems of opportunity – fertile fields of moist, rich soil. With a successful track record of delivery and, yes, responsive problem-solving, you earn the right to plant the seeds of growth in that soil. Enterprise accounts are marketplaces in and of themselves and most selling teams build and follow expansion strategies. Not all focus on account

growth, though, as some do a disservice to the time and effort expended to win the business in the first place. And the disservice applies to the entire selling organization and its stakeholders, who depend on the growth of revenue and profits. And what of the sales team members whose compensation is directly connected to growth? The impact on them is very personal. But the biggest loser if you don't make every effort to grow a major account? It's the account itself. For remember, they chose you among other quality alternatives, investing in you as their partner. And now they depend on you to provide increasing value by going deep and wide in their ecosystem with your portfolio of offerings. They didn't choose you as a one-off. That's the credo, the enterprise selling mindset - business expansion through value growth. If you play in this space, it must be your mindset as well. In fact, it's your duty.

Sure, there are obstacles. There's the dreaded hand-off, sometimes executed well through seamless, teamwork after the win. But some organizations follow the "detach with an ax" strategy, with sales departing to slay the next dragon while service focuses solely on deliverables. No value growth. No business growth. Darwin always gets the last word. It's Natural Selection. Organisms better adapted to their environments survive and produce offspring. Those not adapted, in the world of major accounts, are simply replaced by the competition. Often very quickly.

Earlier, I mentioned duty. How can brainstorming help you fulfill it to your most important accounts? By facilitating that creative focus not only on problems but on opportunities. All the typical brainstorming guidelines apply - session structure, rapid development, invested parties, supportive environments, etc. But in addition to brainstorming problems like "How to recover from the failed integration project", effective teams attack *opportunities* like "How to grow our business outside the development project".

It's the improvement mindset - not a problem that needs fixing, but a situation with the potential to

be made better, more positive, more productive. Think of "Good to Great" for situations.

In Sandler Enterprise Selling, we believe strongly in Team Storm - our practical and powerful brainstorming process. Imagine assembling a group of team members in a structured session focused on a specific topic. And think about concluding, an hour later, with 4-5 concrete actions including due dates and individual accountabilities to drive improvement. Sound like a productive hour? And we strongly advocate involving delivery team members in Team Storm sessions. They're typically overlooked when it comes to account growth although they're often the most informed about account happenings. I can attest that with the organizations that are the very best at "land and expand" strategies, it's difficult to distinguish between sales team and delivery team members. Why? Because lines aren't drawn between the two. No stovepipes. It's about believing and executing as one team - the "account team".

What if there's not a specific opportunity or topic to attack in brainstorming? In and of itself, such a scenario creates amazingly fertile ground for a Team Storm session based on an open theme like "How to identify new growth areas in ABC account". Events built on such opportunistic themes, welcoming those "wild ideas" Osborn referred to, in my experience, are often the most productive sessions of all.

So, brainstorm your problems and build creative solutions as quickly as you can. But to promote sustainable account growth, accelerate opportunity-solving as well. Your organization and your teammates will all benefit. But the real winners will be your clients, who have likely been waiting on you to proactively deliver added value for a long time. They might even decide to keep you around for the long-term. ■

Brian Sullivan is Vice President, Sandler Enterprise Selling, Sandler Training
Find out more [here](#)



How to Apply the Coaching Outcomes from Sports to Sales



There are five major team sports including my favorite, baseball, as well as football, soccer, hockey, and basketball.

Whether led by a head coach or manager, there are coaching consistencies across all five sports.

Coaches observe and coach players on areas of improvement during every practice, before and after practice, and during games. This coaching is key to understanding how teams and individual players improve their performance during the course of the regular season and in the playoffs. On each team, there is a culture of ongoing, never-ending, consistent, powerful, and expert coaching taking place.

Sales is more of an individual sport – like golf and tennis, than it is a team sport. Can you imagine what would happen if these coaching practices applied to sales? Many of us in the sales consulting space have been trying to get sales managers to spend 50% of their time coaching for at least the last 10 years. I wrote about that for the first time in 2007. Twelve years later, only 7% of all sales managers were both spending the time and were effective at coaching.

Seven percent!

Can you imagine what would happen to salespeople, sales teams, company revenues and margins if sales managers coached as often and as effectively as sports coaches? That's right. There would be an unprecedented level of improvement in effectiveness, revenue and profit.

And that leads us to the issue that is most difficult to understand.

Who would benefit the most from the results of more coaching and more effective coaching?

If profit is one of the benefits, then anyone with equity ownership, and anyone who is being measured on profit, like CEO's, Presidents, CRO's, CSO's and owners would benefit.

Yet those are the very same people who are responsible for setting expectations and holding people accountable. Why aren't they demanding that this frequency and level of coaching be part of the company's culture?

And there's more.

This isn't just one group of executives at one company that are acting stupidly, this is close to 93% of executives at 93% of the companies around the world!

This isn't some novel idea that I just floated because I think it makes sense. It has already been proven, that even consistent and mediocre coaching causes a 28% improvement in effectiveness and revenue.

Percentage of Time Spent Coaching	0-9%	10-19%	20-29%	30-39%	40-49%	50-100%
Sales Percentile	43%	47%	50%	53%	54%	55%
Sales DNA	66%	67%	68%	69%	69%	70%
Hunter Competency	56%	59%	61%	61%	61%	61%
Consultative Seller Competency	44%	46%	47%	49%	48%	49%
Qualifier Competency	55%	57%	58%	60%	61%	62%
Closer Competency	25%	27%	28%	30%	30%	31%

Citing the table above in September of 2018, I wrote that “the first row reveals that sales managers who devote at least 50% of their time to coaching salespeople (last column on the right) have salespeople whose sales percentile score is 28% higher than those managers who devoted little to none of their time coaching.” How is that for science to back up somebody's incredibly accurate wild-ass guess from many years ago?

There are five major reasons why sales managers aren't coaching more frequently:

1. Many still have a personal sales quota. Commissions from their personal sales would outweigh the commissions from an increase in

sales from their salespeople.

2. The abundance of new sales tools create a distraction – from getting people trained, to baby-sitting them when they fail to use the tools.
3. Most sales managers don't read books on sales management, nor do they read the latest posts on LinkedIn, Top Sales Magazine, Selling Power, or Blogs. As a result, they have no idea what is expected of sales managers in general.
4. As we discussed earlier in the article, executives in the C Suite are not demanding more and better coaching
5. Even if they agreed that more is better and better is great, they don't know how.

So as we kick-off 2020, the major question is, how can we change this very changeable issue? ■

Dave Kurlan is CEO of Objective Management Group and Kurlan & Associates.
Find out more [here](#)

THE TOP SALES BLOG POSTS – DELIVERED EVERY DAY

Where can you find all the very best sales blogs? Answer: Here.

We have collected together all of the top sales blogs in one place – we have done the work, so you don't have to.

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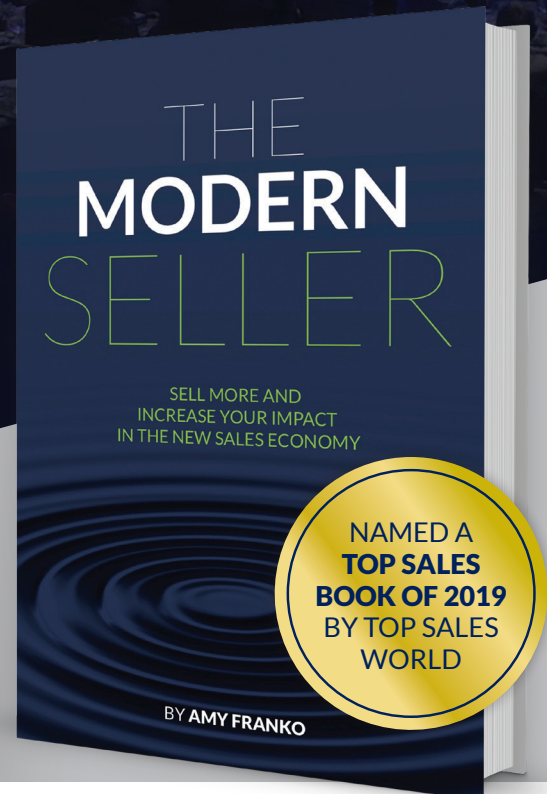
THE NEW SALES ECONOMY REQUIRES MODERN MINDSETS, SELLING SKILLS, AND TOOLS TO SUCCEED.



“Amy kept the audience **captivated** and delivered a **clear, simple message** that provided **powerful tools and actionable ideas** to help our attendees build relationships of value that create lasting business results.”

Karen Cantor-Riggs
President, Air Carriers
Purchasing Conference, Inc.

Book Amy for your
2020 event and receive
25 FREE COPIES
of *The Modern Seller*,
a Top Sales World Top Sales Book



TOP SALES

MAGAZINE

We published twelve magazines in 2019 and each one was jam-packed with interviews, superb articles and lots of news and views. If you missed an edition, **now is the time to catch-up.**



January



February



March



April



May



June



July



August



September



October



November



December

A **JF** INITIATIVE



Are You Making Your Sale a Commodity?



“Commoditization” represents a massive shift in the 21st century economy. It’s a kind of ugly word that reflects an

even uglier situation. Many sellers are struggling to fight it. Are you unconsciously commoditizing your own products and services?

A commodity is a product that markets demand but that is relatively undifferentiated by brand. Think of unprocessed produce like rice, corn, or soybeans. Market price fluctuates on the basis of supply and demand, not features and benefits. There’s nothing wrong with commodities—markets need them and companies make money

buying and selling them.

The trouble comes when a product or service that was once considered “premium” loses its cachet and buyers start treating it like a commodity. Industries fighting this trend today include real estate sales, pharmaceuticals, auto sales, financial services, internet services—markets where products and services used to be highly differentiated, or in short supply, or where sellers had the edge in product knowledge, but are now undercut by much cheaper and easier ways for buyers to get what they need. In any industry vertical, companies struggle to avoid the commodity trap. Perhaps yours is one of them.

The most dangerous position of all is when you unintentionally “commoditize” yourself, as I see clients do all too often. It can happen like this:

- “Free consulting.” Give away too much of your wisdom up front and your buyer will not value what

you have left to sell. You're at risk if you write proposals too early or respond to RFP/RFQ requirements when the company doesn't know you. You run the great risk of giving away your methods, processes and prices for nothing.

The solution? Establish your value based on outcomes that you produce, not the methods by which you achieve them. Present your distinctive value proposition to your highest-level buyers, those who are focused on business results and not the details of your method.

- “Cut rate.” The buyer will not value your product or service more than you do. If you lead with a discounted price, or discount your price whenever they ask you to, you seriously undermine your value proposition. If you discount without an equal reduction in scope, you have no real price point. The buyer will continue to want it for less, and there's no end to that. If you want to offer different levels of pricing, base them on different levels of value rather than discounting. If the buyer is going to select a vendor based solely on discounted prices, you don't want to win that business unless you are selling a commodity.

What to do? When they ask for a discount—and they will—ask them what part of the offer they would like to eliminate or cut back in order to fit their budget. You are willing to negotiate but not simply to cut your price.

- “Earn It.” Accept a contract for a small piece of business at an undercut price in hopes of earning the right to do more at better margins. In my experience, this strategy leaves you pigeonholed in a small, cheap vendor space that you can't escape from. The

kind of work you accept teaches customers who you are and what you sell. If you are inadvertently teaching “small”, “cheap,” and “niche,” that's how the buyer will identify you. National firms don't buy from the companies that make cheap sales to their local outlets. It's very hard and very expensive to move from one silo to another inside a large company if you are not positioned well in the first place.

How to handle this? Don't accept bad business or undercut your price ever as a stepping-stone. To get started in a new company, work towards establishing a good piece of business for your first sale.

- “Not on target.” When you violate your “target filter” (my term for the set of criteria that defines your ideal customer) by going after business that is wrong for you, you devalue yourself and what you are selling. It means you don't trust your strategy, you don't trust the image you intended to present to your market, and you don't trust your ability to sell the right things to the right customers. Every client has stories about the “killer

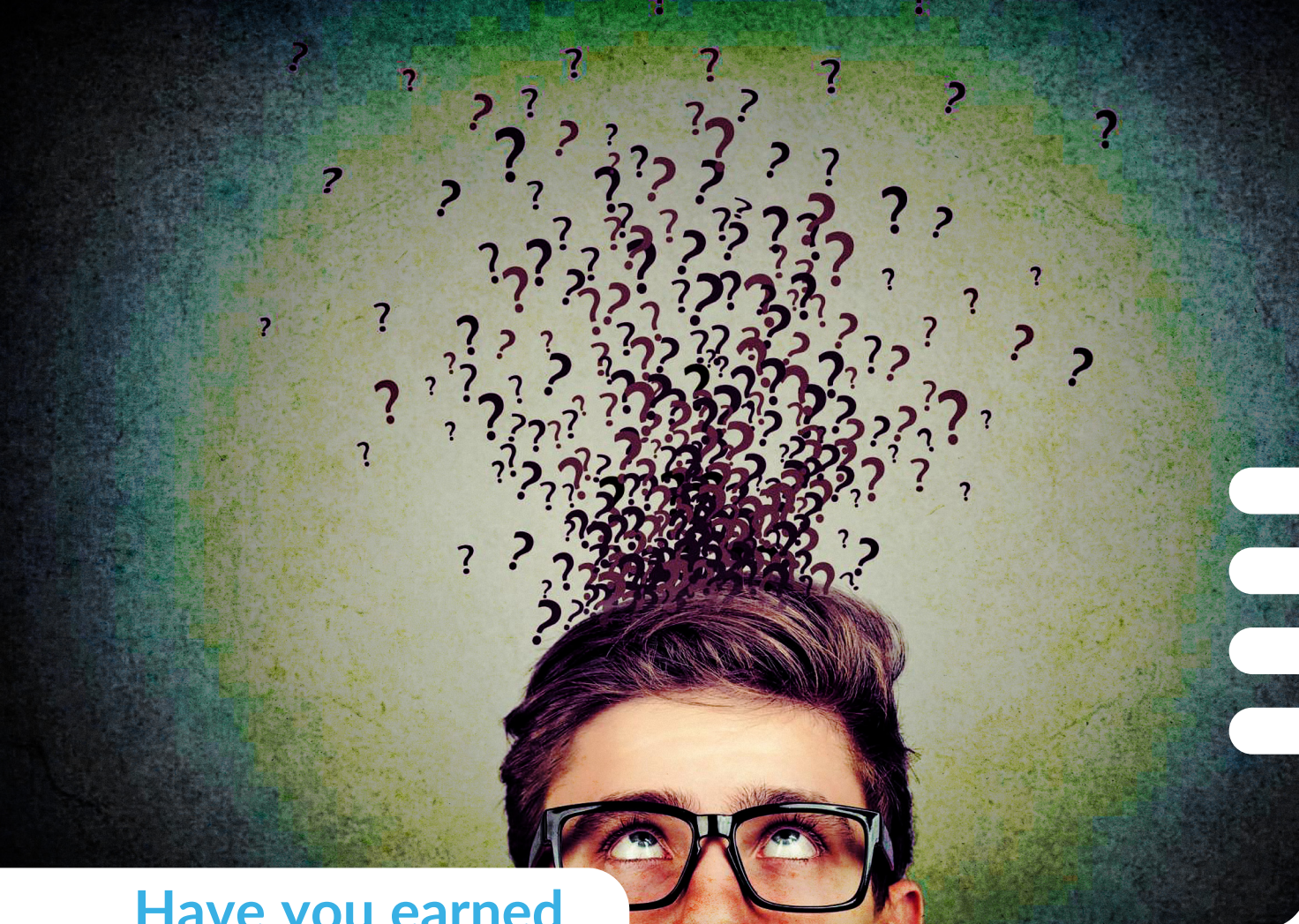
whale” – the one you landed that was all wrong for you. If you're honest with yourself, you knew all along it wasn't a good deal for you.

This is an easy fix. Review and revise your target filter, if need be, until you find better companies. But until then, learn to say NO. And stick to it.

Markets are constantly commoditizing products and services—it's a natural outcome of innovation and globalization. If you sell something unique or differentiated, make sure you're not helping the market commoditize you. ■

Barbara Weaver Smith is Founder/CEO at The Whale Hunters. Find out more [here](#)

“The trouble comes when a product or service that was once considered “premium” loses its cachet and buyers start treating it like a commodity.”



Have you earned the right to ask the question?



What's the meaning of life, Mitch asks Curly? After a chuckle and a brief pause, Curly replies, It's the "one thing". Perplexed, Mitch asks, what's the one thing? With a sly smile, Curly says, ah, that's what you must find out for yourself.

If you recognize this exchange, congratulations. It is a pivotal moment in the Billy Crystal movie classic, *City Slickers*. If you are too young to remember it or have never had the chance to see it, it is well worth adding to your binge-watching movie playlist.

What does *City Slickers* and the "one thing" have to do with selling?

If there is one thing, I've learned about selling, it is that timing is everything!

Yet, I see so many sellers showing up in front of buyers, as if they think they are attending a speed dating event.

If you've never seen such an event in action, it is hilarious and ridiculous at the same time. Bell rings. Four minutes at the table with a total stranger. Your goal? Make enough of a connection so that the other person wants to talk to you again later. Your two minutes starts. You spew the pitch. Now the other person gets their turn. Bell rings. Move to the next table, do it again. Hope to seal a deal. A follow up phone call or a date to meet again.

I've not participated in such silliness myself, but I have had fun sitting at the bar watching my friends engage in the insanity.

Stop approaching target prospects like you are

attending a speed dating event.

If you are responsible for doing outbound work to fuel the top end of the funnel, then wake up. Your random acts of phone, email or LinkedIn spamcasting do not work, and you know it. The lack of high-quality sales meetings booked on your calendar proves my point. This spamcasting behavior shows up at the most critical point in the sales process – the first touch. This first interaction is critical to get right, yet, getting it consistently wrong is the new normal in selling.

And that leads me back to the one thing. Timing.

When that first chance to capture a buyer's attention matters so much, trying to speed sell your way to a sales meeting doesn't work. Maybe you think (or your sales manager thinks) you are simply being efficient. What you are really doing is shooting yourself in the foot. When that first interaction adds no business value to a buyer's day, you rarely get a do-over to try and get it right.

Improving sales funnel efficiency remains a top sales priority for most companies. Without highly qualified leads in the pipeline, salespeople cannot convert leads into sales conversations much less move a prospect down the path to purchase.

Opportunity is knocking.

As Salesforce reported in their 3rd annual State of Sales research, "winning deals still requires human to human interaction." Your opportunity to engage a target buyer won't happen with just any human interaction though. It must be the right interaction that happens at the right time and in the right way.

Your speed selling pitch isn't the right way!

Buyer expectations keep rising. They've made that clear. For all the talk about "aligning to the buyer's journey" most companies fail miserably at doing this right.

No degree in rocket science required.

It surprises me to no end how complicated people want to make the front-end of the sales process when it doesn't need to be that way. Demonstrate value + capture attention = score a meeting.

The biggest disconnect is in how sellers try to capture a buyer's initial attention. Your sales pitch, no matter how artfully you think it is crafted, is not adding value to a buyer who can buy from any other competitor in your category.

Here is the formula that I use, and for the record, my personalization approach works.

Decision makers in similar roles in similar industries are likely thinking about or experiencing similar challenges. That kind of information can be found through doing research on the web, using LinkedIn or business intelligence tools.

1. Do the research. Land on 1-3 insights you could use in your outbound work.
2. Write a sales message that leads with ONE brief, relevant and specific insight that you know is or could be a problem for the buyer. Followed by a sentence about how other companies are looking at the problem.
3. Suggest a meeting to discuss further.

Notice I didn't say talk about you or your products! These 3 steps form the template you can use that sets up the bulk of your outreach. Then you quickly personalize more specifically to each individual before hitting send.

This is not a long process. It is not a sales pitch. And you are not writing the great American novel. The message is 4-5 sentences max. Short, sweet, relevant to the buyer.

Coming full circle to the title of my article.

In sales, the one thing always comes back to timing. Have you earned the right to ask a prospective customer to meet with you, or are you trying to speed sell them like every other rep?

It is a new sales year, so what have you got to lose by ditching the pitch in favor of selling in a better way? ■

Barbara Giamanco, CEO at Social Centered Selling and host of the Conversations with Women in Sales Podcast. Find out more [here](#)

The Hunt for New Clients

Every commercial organization should focus an appropriate amount of time on hunting for and securing new clients. Sadly, too few have a clearly defined strategy that maximizes their sales function's valuable selling time and minimises the related costs of this exercise.

We want to discover what is working for the most successful companies and why.

As usual, there are five sections:

Hunting: The Good, The Bad and the Ugly

Every organisation is unique and can employ a variety of approaches in their quest to attract the attention of their target market. That's why it can be extremely useful to invest some time analysing which lead generation initiatives worked well in the past, why they worked well and what improvements can be made to optimise their effectiveness.

Client Profiling

The more existing accounts that salespeople have, the less time they can devote to prospecting for new client business. Therefore, they need objective criteria to determine which of their prospective clients to contact first. This can produce huge timesaving as the most successful organizations have increased sales purely by introducing and utilizing "prospect criteria".

Targeting Relevant Opportunities

Working to the maxim that "All business is good business" is unrealistic and totally erroneous. It takes

just as long to work an unprofitable opportunity through the pipeline, only to lose it at the death, as it does a profitable one. The ability to determine which is which can have a huge impact on an organization's success.

Strategizing Growth Within Existing Clients

Whichever statistic you choose to accept, it now costs five times, ten times or even fifteen times more to locate, qualify and sell to a new client as it does to sell to an existing one. This fact alone should prompt all sales organizations to examine the way they are managing and growing their current client base.

Hunting in Packs

Team selling brings people together from across the organization and externally, with each playing a role within the sales process. This collaboration enables us to populate the team with "specialists," who comprehensively understand the points of view of the multiple buying team members, increasing the likelihood of alignment and favorable outcomes.

We very much hope that you will take part in this highly relevant piece of research and, in return, receive a full set of our reports.

Take the survey





A Year in Perspective

2019 was yet another record-breaking year for all things “Top Sales” – Top Sales World, Top Sales Futurists and Top Sales Magazine – all now under the JF Initiatives brand.

We ...

- Promoted 720 posts from our contributors
- Plus 240 video tips
- Selected and published 48 “Top 10 Posts of the Week” – that is another 480 posts we publicized.
- Published 12 Top Sales Magazines – each one containing an interview and 10 superb articles
- Distributed 50 weekly “Around Top Sales World in 7 Days” newsletters
- Recognized 50 excellent authors via our “Top Sales Book of the Week” section

- Compiled the Top 50 Blogs, Top 50 Keynote Speakers and Top 50 Sales Books
- And we once again organized the annual Top Sales Awards
- Recorded 10 Top Sales Roundtables

A big thank you to the ...

[TSW Contributor Team](#)

[Top Sales Futurists Team](#)

[The Top Sales Magazine Columnists](#)

[And regular Top Sales Magazine feature writers](#)

A **JF** INITIATIVE

In Sales, You Need the Right Mix of Hard Skills and Soft Skills



You've got technical knowledge, market intel, front-line experience, and the tools you need.



But there's something else you need to succeed: the intangibles or "soft skills" matter, too. Let's take a look at the differences.

Hard skills are specialized

They include everything required by a specific job role. Engineers need to know how to design and draft blueprints. HR professionals must understand employment law and how to handle records related to hiring, promoting, and terminating employees. Like every function, selling requires certain hard

skills, too, depending on what's being sold and how.

Hard skills are acquired through education and on-the-job experience. Resumes showcase hard skills. People receive certifications, degrees, and promotions because of the hard skills they demonstrate. Hard skills are testable, demonstrable, and easy to define, teach, and measure.

Soft skills are universal

They're the same for people in any job function. These skills are transferable to any job role.

Soft skills are acquired through life experience. They are demonstrated through interpersonal relationships, positive attitude, conflict resolution, creative problem solving, quality decision making, and ability to handle stress and change. Soft skills are not as tangible, observable or measurable as hard skills. They are linked to personality and preferences, and this can make interviewing for them, assessing them, and performance managing around them uncomfortable.

Most sales job descriptions profile the ideal candidate as having a hybrid of soft and hard skills. Despite this, companies spend only 27.6% of their training investments on soft skills development (source: Green & McGill).

Definition of Soft Skills

Soft skills are "the personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people."

These attributes include a broad and combined range of people skills, communication skills, personality traits, habits, attitudes, social intelligence, emotional intelligence, team orientation, cognitive processing of information, and ability/willingness to tolerate ambiguity and rapid change.

The term "soft skills" is sometimes used

interchangeably with terms like intangibles, leadership, character traits, interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, common sense, being a “people person,” life skills, influential, likeable, politically savvy, and team player. Each of these terms depicts a facet of soft skills but doesn't fully encompass all that the term is intended to convey.

The soft skills that matter most in sales are the ones required for effectively establishing trust, influencing others, and forming relationships with buyers. No one has mastered all soft skills, just as no one has or will master all hard skills for all functional areas. The right blend, along with the desire to keep learning and growing, is what makes some sellers more effective than others.

Why Soft Skills Are Important

Having “soft skills” doesn't make you soft. But relying disproportionately on “hard skills” will make you seem hard, cold, distant, and uncaring. If you've proven yourself through hard work and functional prowess, you may have neglected the simultaneous development of relationships and connections. After all, those skills weren't a part of your sales training and aren't on your annual performance reviews.

If you're struggling to make sales and retain customers despite your technical expertise and ability to correctly represent your products, it could be that there's a gap in your soft skills.

A Harvard University study found that 85% of professional achievements are determined by soft skills and only 15% by demonstration of hard skills. Studies by Stanford and Carnegie Mellon produced similar findings, as early as 1918. A study conducted in the UK with McDonald's predicted that half a million people in the UK alone are held back annually from career progression due to a lack of soft skills.

Researchers conclude that soft skills are every bit as important as hard skills in job success, no matter what the role is. In sales, though, there's a heightened need for soft skills because relationships and interpersonal interactions are so critically important. Customers are looking for value and an

engaging experience at every touchpoint. Sellers who lack soft skills are unable to produce strong and sustained sales results.

Over-Emphasizing Soft Skills

In sales, soft skills are generally recognized as being vital to the role. Often, in hiring, prioritization of soft skills causes sales managers to overlook the essential hard skills. Sometimes, a strong display of one interpersonal skill initially masks deficits in other soft skills.

Here's a classic example. An affable candidate aces the interview, making people laugh and want to spend more time with him. He's likeable, outgoing, and at ease as he talks about his sales experience and how much customers like him. No one notices that his answers are a little bit evasive when it comes to performance. No one digs into his slightly scattered answers that suggest there might be some issues with focus, ability to connect the dots, or responsiveness to subtle cues.

The personality this candidate leads with may be all he has to offer. Too often, this isn't discovered until it's too late. That's not fair to the candidate, and it's unfortunate for the organization and its customers, too. As important as soft skills are, they're simply not enough (especially when they aren't diversified).

In sales, you owe it to yourself to continually build your skills. Don't settle for product and process training alone. Technical knowledge and functional skills will only take you so far. It may be uncomfortable to work on soft skills. It may be difficult to self-assess your own gaps in soft skills. And it may be an unusual request when you ask for training or coaching in any area of soft skills. Nevertheless, you owe it to yourself and everyone who's counting on you to acquire, hone, and continually build your soft skills for selling. ■

Deb Calvert is President of People First Productivity Solutions.
Find out more [here](#)



Teach People What To Want



My colleague Daniel Burrus, technology researcher and futurist, said, "It's a mistake to assume that people know

what they might want. If they don't know what's possible, they will ask for too little."

Brilliant! A big part of our sales job is showing the possibilities. Most people don't think beyond their daily experience, they don't spend much time considering what is possible for them. That's our opportunity.

In the early days of western society there was no internet nor Wikipedia. Knowledge was catalogued by Britannica and World Book. Salespeople went door to door and sold the value of having a comprehensive knowledge source on the shelves of your home library. They and the National

Geographic magazine sellers made global information accessible to the average home. In my own home we had the full collection of World Book Encyclopedias and a multiyear collection of National Geographic magazines. These were sources of pride for my parents' generation.

But nobody would have gone out on their own to acquire these assets. It was the salespeople who stimulated the desire by showing what was possible with new knowledge sources. That transformed our society.

The same was true for life and accident insurance. Salespeople went door to door and showed people why they should be concerned about insurance and how they could provide for their families. None of those buyers were talking about these topics and they certainly weren't seeking a way to buy them. That too, transformed our society.

Photographers called on homes to take photos with large cumbersome cameras and capture memories of families and children. Nobody was

actively taking photos until salespeople showed the value of having photos. Personal cameras came about because salespeople had popularized the notion of having more photos to preserve your memorable moments. Vacuum cleaners were sold door to door by showing real time demonstrations of better cleanliness right there in your own home! Health club memberships were sold to people who weren't seeking a workout source. Fitness wasn't even popular when the selling began. People didn't know what was possible.

Our job as sales professionals is not just in generating transactions, it is in converting the uninterested into the vitally committed. We are in the position to help our society advance by embracing new possibilities. When more people become committed to better health practices, smarter financial management, safer practices for taking care of their families, etc. then our world becomes a better place.

Whether you sell enterprise solutions for

technological issues or earth moving equipment or chemicals that allow other things to be created, you are in the role of helping people to see and care about what is possible.

Please consider your role as vitally important. When you do your job well things get better for all of us. We need what you do, but we may not realize it yet.

What is the ultimate value that others receive by buying from you? ■

Jim Cathcart helps people see the value in what they do and grows their courage to do it well. He is the original author of *Relationship Selling™* and 20 other books. As one of the world's most award-winning professional speakers he has reached millions with his messages of encouragement and wisdom.

Contact him via most social media or at Cathcart.com

THE BEST OF THE BEST IN 2019

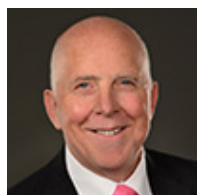
For 2019, Top Sales World selected and announced three Top 50 lists ...



Click on each image for more details



A Day in the Life of a CEO



If you want to sell to the "C" suite it's important that you understand how they think and how they operate. Here's a peek into a day in the life of a typical CEO.

I get into the office at 7.00 am to get a head start on my emails before the sales calls begin. As usual I have over 200 sales emails. I read each one carefully in case there's something in there that my company desperately needs. You can't afford to miss anything in today's competitive world.

"Many of these emails include compelling offers - enthralling White Papers, riveting Case Studies, innovative polls - often unmissable Special Offers. Each time I excitedly click onto a link I reach a form I have to fill before I can get my eager mitts onto someone's content. I always carefully fill out all my details to make sure the inevitable follow up calls and emails get my name right. Sometimes there's an offer with a time limit - they always seem to be at midnight that day so I have to hurry to take

advantage before the offer runs out.

"Often the emails are hard to understand and it takes me a while to work out what they're talking about. This slows me down but it's important to make the effort to understand these things.

"When I've finished I turn my attention to LinkedIn. It takes me quite some time to work my way through the dozens of new connection requests from total strangers, many from exotic foreign places. It's so thrilling to discover how many people in places I've never heard of so desperately want to follow me.

"Next I move on to the messages. About 75% of the 160 messages I typically get are from the people I connected with yesterday. I enthusiastically absorb them because who knows when I'll need to have someone to rewrite my LinkedIn profile, develop new apps, provide me with exciting software services or deliver me dozens of qualified leads every week.

"I wrote an article last week and dozens of sycophants - sorry, I mean valuable connections - have "liked" it and even make outstanding and in-depth comments like "*nice article*". Of course I check

the profiles of all these people because they obviously love me. It's fascinating to see how many of them crush their quotas and are Amazon number #1 best sellers - impressive. I make a note of them all in case I ever need to hire gun salespeople.

"I get a lot of videos too and I watch every one, even the 15 minute ones that don't actually say anything. There may be a hidden gem near the end.

"By now it's after 11.00 am. My progress is slowed by the stream of sales calls I get my EA to put directly through to me. It's important to keep up to date with what's out there on the market. I listen carefully to the SDRs that call me. I feel sorry for the ones I can actually understand. Most of them are 14 years old and know nothing about me or my business. I know they have targets to meet so I feel obliged to help them qualify me to see if I'm rich and important enough for one of their proper salespeople to bother with.

"Once I've finished I go back through those who have sent me their calendar to book the free 15

minute discussions they're offering me.

"Then I reluctantly pause for lunch. I have to squeeze a few unimportant things into my lunch hour - board meetings, executive meetings, conversations with my biggest customers, talks with government ministers, reviewing sales, planning strategy, etc. - before I get back to answering sales calls.

"Finally, at 6.00 pm I've cleared my messages, answered dozens of sales call, had four of those 15 minute *"getting to know you"* phone meetings and read 17 White papers, 11 Case Studies and filled out 3 polls.

"Reflecting on another successful day I get on my unicorn and gallop contentedly back kiss my princess and wake her from her 100 year sleep, reminding myself to get those pesky dwarves out of the garage." ■

Steve Hall is MD of Executive Sales Coaching Australia. Find out more [here](#)

Coming Soon ... TOP SALES LIBRARY

The Library will contain shelves stacked with every conceivable resource that could possibly be required, so that's articles, webinars, videos, white papers, eBooks, podcasts etc. They will all be neatly categorized into thirty- six sections with everything from sales management to lead generation, from enterprise selling to negotiation, from ... you get the picture?

The reality is that there are very good resource locations where one can find lots of information but nothing on this scale. Our ambition is for this to become THE go-to repository for world-class sales and marketing advice.





Technology's Role in Driving Sales and Marketing Alignment



Not long ago, sales and marketing executives spoke to each other during senior team meetings, but frankly, not much more frequently than that.

They executed their respective plans, and rarely counted on the other to be of much help in furthering the agenda of their department. Sales had overall responsibility for revenue, marketing took on other goals and focused on the brand, awareness, reputation, positioning and demand generation strategy, not always linked with sales. The stories of marketing and sales each thinking the other area was essentially going in the wrong directions are many and often legendary.

Times have changed dramatically and now sales and marketing both own revenue goals and the "revenue" process, which often begins in marketing and ends in customer success, increasingly reporting to a single executive titled the Chief Growth Officer or Chief Commercial Officer. Still, there is often an executive in charge of the sales organization, and

there is an executive in charge of marketing. But while they may be in command of different teams, it is essential they are aligned in all ways: in the go-to-market strategy, the positioning, the value proposition, key messages, and the tactics in place to drive awareness, lead flow, lead qualification, and the strategies and tactics necessary to advance from qualified leads to closed revenue.

With each new transformative technology, the notion of achieving new heights in sales and marketing performance, more easily, and more measurably, has been one of the hopes, if not promises.

First came CRM, then other sales automation platforms, and then Marketing Automation tools and platforms, and now there's Account-Based Marketing (ABM) technology. Of course, there are

literally thousands of other associated technologies and companies, tools, and platforms that have cropped up around all of these areas.

Even with all of the new automation and other tech tools on the scene, nothing yet automates sales and marketing alignment! **One can argue that the tech and the merging of roles that has come with it have actually made sales and marketing alignment compulsory – more so now than ever before.**

Consider this: your sales and marketing teams are probably leaving money on the table, if not the floor, without real, tangible interlock including planning, process, execution and measurement.

When sales and marketing alignment works, it's a beautiful thing: Aberdeen Group estimates that sales and marketing alignment can lead to a +32% increase in year-over-year revenue growth. MarketingProfs reports that sales and marketing alignment can lead to +38% higher win rates.

So why isn't marketing and sales alignment success more pervasive? Perhaps because it's not an easy process. But it is a straightforward one, with clear, measurable, and substantive benefits. More on this later.

The saying, "the platform is not the strategy," may have first popped up during the early days of CRM. It underscored the fact that great sales and marketing tech can take you a long way forward – but only if you have a plan for alignment between the sales and marketing organizations who are jointly using it.

Many sales and marketing teams are using the tools, but not in a coordinated, unified way that delivers on business objectives. Chances are they're technologies that measure and provide insights on demand, client contact, intent, engagement, predictive behaviors, personalization, conversion and more. But how best to move forward and use these analytical insights, across sales and marketing, most effectively?

In many recent surveys of B2B marketers, especially for proven, newly reinvigorated approaches such as ABM, sales and marketing

alignment is consistently cited as one of the most critical success factors. In fact, as reported in TOPO's 2019 Account Based Benchmark report, "coordinating efforts across sales and marketing—is a hallmark of effective execution."

Sales and marketing alignment doesn't happen naturally. It takes effort, time, commitment, data, tools and thoroughness – which may be why so many try and quit or attempt alignment unsuccessfully. Success includes buy-in, behavior shifts, even changes to organization structure and comp. On top of this, the management system and metrics that will keep things running as planned is also crucial.

How well and how thoroughly true alignment is accomplished will affect everything else that comes after.

This joint, interlocked effort may even be considered to be akin to the creation of a high-performance (sub-)culture between sales and marketing, centered around opportunity and revenue-generating initiatives – and results.

As lines blur between sales and marketing organizations, unified views of your key accounts and customers, what they consider to be of most value, how to deliver that value to them, and how to engage them throughout the entire length of their decision-making journey is more important than ever.

If you start with alignment, then it's likely that all that follows will be not only what you hoped for, but exactly what you planned for. ■

Ron Greenberg is CEO of GROWBILIZE, a global, strategic consultancy focused on helping organizations deliver results within their most valuable accounts through account-based sales and marketing.
Find out more [here](#)

Dan Weinfurter is a Director at Mentor Group UK. You will find his personal site [here](#)



Time Management



Time is nature's greatest "force." Nothing can stop it; nothing can alter it. Unlike the wind, it cannot be felt. Unlike the sun, it cannot be seen. Yet, of all nature's forces, time has the most profound effect on us.

Time remains constant, but our perception of it changes. When we focus on it, it slows down. When we turn our backs on it, it speeds up. Our illusion makes us think it is something tangible. We arrange it, divide it up, and give some to our friends. Sometimes we feel it is precious, at other times we waste it. We give it the power to heal

when we say, "Time heals all wounds." It can also kill, as when we live stressful lives because we "never have enough time." On a day to day basis, nothing is defined and redefined in our minds as much as time. It's a wonder, we can still recognize it!

Herein lies our power. Because things are as we perceive them, we can choose to see time as a

manageable commodity and live our lives according to that assumption. This is one of the secrets of successful people they work at shaping those things which others think are uncontrollable.

Efficient versus Effective

In discussing time management, some people argue that "What we need to be is more efficient with our time!" Other people claim, "Let's not worry so much about efficiency, let's be more effective!"

Efficiency means doing things right. Effectiveness means doing the right things. Working efficiently is doing things with the least amount of wasted effort. Efficiency gets you from point A to point B via a straight line. Inefficiency goes in circles. Effectiveness means doing the things that yield results.

Many people, when learning about time management, ask the question, "Which should I work on first, efficiency or effectiveness?" In theory and practice, the best answer is to improve your effectiveness first. It's much better to aim your sights at the result than to worry about the process. Too often we get bogged down in the means and lose sight of the end.

Eliminating Time Wasters

Time wasters come from the people around you as well as from within yourself. Some time wasters are unavoidable, but reducible nonetheless. Identify the most frequent sources of time wasters in your day. As a means of comparison, we've included a list of time wasters. Many researchers find the same handful at the top of their lists, which indicates that they are problems common to all of us:

1. Scheduling less important work before more important work.
2. Starting a job before thinking it through.
3. Leaving jobs before they are completed.
4. Doing things that can be delegated to another person.

5. Doing things that can be delegated to modern equipment.
6. Doing things that actually aren't a part of your real job.
7. Keeping too many, too complicated, or overlapping records.
8. Handling too wide a variety of duties.
9. Failing to build barriers against interruptions.
10. Allowing conferences and discussions to wander.
11. Conducting unnecessary meetings, visits, and/or phone calls.
12. Chasing trivial data after the main facts are in.
13. Socializing at great length between tasks.

Setting Priorities

When setting your priorities, there are two famous laws to remember. The first is Parkinson's Law. It states that work tends to expand to fill the time allotted for its completion. Parkinson's Law makes setting priorities twice as important. If you don't know what your priorities are, your other work will expand to fill in the extra time. It will take longer for you to accomplish less.

The second law of note is Pareto's Principle. Pareto's Principle, in this situation, states that 80 percent of your results come from 20 percent of your efforts. Another way to look at it is that 80 percent of your business comes from 20 percent of your clients.

Using a "To Do" List

A list of "things to do" for each day and week is a valuable aid to managing your time. A "to do" list organizes your thinking and planning onto one form in the least amount of time with the maximum amount of efficiency. Such a list is especially helpful if it coincides with the record keeping you already do for your company. After a short time, you will find yourself handling a greater volume of work without increasing your stress. You'll simply become more efficient.

As we mentioned before, Parkinson's Law states that work expands to fill the time allotted for it. Your "to do" list should, therefore, define a specific amount of time (if possible) for each activity. This will keep work from "expanding."

Your activities should be listed in order of priority. Work on high priorities first. In listing the activities, it is helpful to spell out the result as well as the process. Stating when, where, and what you're going to do increases your chances of doing it successfully.

As the day goes by, check off completed activities and make any notes that seem relevant. In the evening, make out a new "to do" list for the next day and include any activities you couldn't complete the day before. Always save your "to do" lists for future reference and evaluation.

Keeping Records Of Time Use

The experts in time management all agree that the more records you keep, the more you will be aware of the opportunities for improving your use of time.

Through systematic record keeping you will learn, among other things, what tasks you're having trouble with. You can actually chart your performance to get a graphic illustration of your strengths and weaknesses.

Procrastination

"Don't put off for tomorrow what you can do today" (My Mother ever since I can remember).

Procrastination is like a virus. It creeps up on you slowly, drains you of energy, and is difficult to get rid of if your resistance is low. Procrastination is a close relative of incompetence and a first cousin to inefficiency, which is why their marriage is taboo.

These suggestions will help you conquer the virus:

1. Give yourself deadlines. In moderation, pressure motivates. Extreme pressure debilitates. Set appointments, make commitments, write out your goals, and otherwise develop the determination to succeed.

2. Don't duck the difficult problems. Every day we are faced with both difficult and easy tasks. Tackle the difficult ones first so that you can look forward to the easy ones. If you work on the easy ones first, you might expand the time that they take in order to avoid the difficult ones waiting for you.

Many people put off difficult or large tasks because they appear too huge to tackle in a reasonable time frame. They feel that if they start and complete the "large" task at one sitting, it will prevent them from accomplishing any of the other tasks they have to do on that day. The answer to this problem is to break all large or difficult tasks into their smaller

subparts. Then, you can do each of the subparts of the larger project over a series of days, if appropriate.

3. Don't let perfectionism paralyze you. This is a problem which many salespeople have when writing proposals. They sit with pad and pen in hand waiting for the "right" words to come out. What they are doing is avoiding the process of writing. Be prolific in your activities. You can always go back later and polish those things you're unhappy with. Better yet, you can delegate the polishing to someone else.

Because humans are so susceptible to procrastination, you must work at building up your immunity to it. Effective action is the best medicine.

“Because humans are so susceptible to procrastination, you must work at building up your immunity to it. Effective action is the best medicine.”

Handling Paperwork

Try to answer any correspondence immediately. After you've read the letter or email, immediately write your reply on the back of the letter or answer the email. Act immediately on whatever you can. If you receive a magazine, peruse it and clip out articles you intend to read. Try categorizing your reading material into three groups: articles you must read soon, articles you should read, and articles that would be nice to read. Clipping the article makes it more accessible. Naturally, there will be more than mail accumulating on your desk. Adopt a policy of picking up paperwork only once. This means you should not look at something and put it back down where you found it. It's much wiser to take some form of action on the item. Decide what to do with it and move it along to the next step toward completion.

Change Your Bad Habits

"Habit, my friend, is practice long pursued, that at the last becomes the man himself" (Evenus, 5th century B.C.)

Managing your time efficiently and effectively will require some changes in your behavior and thinking. Those changes require practice.

Giant strides, when looked at closely, are made up of many small steps. In "overhauling" your management of time, you, too, need to take small steps. Start today doing those things that will make you a better manager of your time. After you've improved in one area, choose another and so on. ■

Dr Tony Alessandra is a Hall of Fame
Keynote Speaker and Founder of
Assessments24x7.com.
Find out more [here](#)

TOP SALES FUTURISTS

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We have gathered together 24 of the world's leading sales thought leaders, all of whom are passionate about the future of professional selling. We have joined forces to share our experience and wisdom, providing advice and opinion via a blog, whitepapers, eBooks, podcasts, webinars, regular newsletters and monthly Roundtables. Each one brings a level of experience and considerable success in their chosen field – some have more than one area of specialization, which can only be an added bonus for our visitors/subscribers. [Visit Here](#)





Truth Bomb: You All Look Alike to Your Buyers



How do you tell one internet security company from another? One IT provider from another?

One marketing resource, one insurance broker, one attorney, one banker, one consultant?

Often you *can't* tell them apart, because they have similar offerings and the same party line about what they do. There's nothing unique and certainly no reason to spend time hearing their pitches.

That wouldn't matter if sales reps were meeting or exceeding quota, if their pipelines were qualified and their projections accurate, and if they had only committed and loyal clients. But that's not happening. Instead, their forecasts are "smoke and mirrors," and sales leaders continue to complain.

After five straight years of decline, quota attainment has rebounded slightly over the past

couple years — from a record low (53%) in 2017, to 56.9 percent in 2019, according to CSO Insights' 2019 World-Class Sales Practices Study. But the report summary—entitled "All That Glitters Is Not Gold"—points out: "At the same time that revenue-oriented metrics are going up, win rates, seller retention, effectiveness and depth of customer relationship are all flat or down."

That's pitiful. Despite the fact that most companies have marketing automation solutions, targeted outreach by SDRs, and intense social media strategies, B2B salespeople are still struggling to win and retain customers. The problem is, there's too much competition and not enough competitive differentiation.

I Feel Like We've Met Before

I've just returned from three conferences, and the #1 challenge that sales leaders repeated again and again was how to get leads in the pipe. Every speaker complained they didn't have enough leads.

No one mentioned “qualified” leads.

It’s the same old story. None of us stands out. How could we, when we’re all standing behind screens? Our messages are mostly digital, and they all sound the same. Worse yet, in many cases, the promises that salespeople make are ... well, suspect.

Talk to any software vendor, and they can’t wait to show you their cool software. But buyers don’t actually buy software. They buy what the software does for them—how it saves time, decreases costs, engages customers, tracks referrals, etc. They don’t want to see your demo. They want you to ask smart questions about their business, engage them in conversation, and articulate specifically how your product will mitigate their challenges.

You have a choice. You can look like every other company, or you can set yourself apart from the rest.

The trick is getting in front of your buyers before they even know they need you, helping them identify the pain points they didn’t know were hurting, gaining their trust, and building a relationship.

It’s Your Turn to Stand Out

How do you ensure that your sales team gets in the door before your competitors? You ensure they receive referral introductions to their prime prospects—from people those prospects know and trust.

Salespeople know that building trust is paramount, and it can be difficult to achieve. In groundbreaking research by Steve W. Martin, business buyers said they think about 12 percent of salespeople are excellent, 23 percent are good, 38 percent are average (whatever that means), and 27 percent are just plain bad at their jobs. Worse yet, only 18 percent of the salespeople these buyers met over the past year were “trusted advisers whom they respect.”

Yikes!

With referrals, your team walks straight into meetings with their ideal clients. They don’t have to worry about getting past gatekeepers or heading off

the competition, because they have the best possible competitive advantage—a relationship built on trust.

Why Does a Referral Program Ensure Trust?

I may have answered my own question. Reps cold call, send cold emails, do cold outreach on social media, and rely on marketing to nurture prospects and send them qualified leads. They forget that technology doesn’t close deals. People do. We seal deals by building trusted relationships, and that’s exactly what happens when companies adopt referral selling as their primary outbound prospecting approach.

When reps get a referral introduction, they arrive with credibility and trust already earned. Why? The trust the prospect has for the referral source is transferred to the salesperson. Referred reps get every meeting in one call, because their calls are expected and welcome. Then it’s up to them to reinforce that trust by having intelligent conversations, uncovering needs, and sharing insights and best practices. No pitching, no promotions, no duplicitous sales tactics.

Here’s the beauty of a referral. Because buyers trust referred salespeople, they typically share important inside information—including how decisions are made, who is on board, who to watch out for, and what reps need to do to seal the deal. Referred reps are privy to important timelines and budget concerns. They have the inside track, and their probability of closing a deal is well more than 50 percent (most salespeople say it’s more than 70 percent). No other lead generation approach comes even close.

When you prospect through referrals, you set the standard by which others must compete. Your competitors don’t stand a chance. You’re different. You stand out. You get the meeting. You get qualified leads in the pipe. Why would you work any other way? ■

Joanne S. Black, Founder, No More Cold Calling. Find out more [here](#)

2019 Roundtable Series

THE SALES FUTURISTS
The Future of Professional Selling is Here

The Sales Futurists, are a team of twenty four of the world's leading sales thought leaders, all of whom are passionate about the future of professional selling. They joined forces to share their experience and wisdom, providing advice and opinion via a blog, whitepapers, eBooks, podcasts, webinars and regular newsletters on such topics as AI, Sales Enablement, Customer Experience Management, Digital Transformation etc.

They also recorded ten Roundtable discussions during 2019, and each one focused on a hot topic of the day. If you missed any of these, here are the links ...

- Social Selling Or Social Intrusion?
- Women In Sales – Are We Making Advances?
- What Exactly Is Sales Agility And Why You Need To Become Commercially Agile
- Customer Experience Management Has To Be A Company-Wide Commitment
- In Sales, Are Effective Communication Skills Becoming A Lost Art?
- An Abundance Of Managers And Too Few Leaders – Why?
- Is Sales Technology Helping Or Hindering Current Sales Achievement Levels?
- Q4 Is Here – There Is Still Time!
- How To Deliver More Next Year With Less
- Are You Listening In The C-Lounge? I Need Help

A JF INITIATIVE



2019 Top Sales Post

Why The M In CMO Should Be An X
by Shep Hyken

For many years I've been preaching that customer service is the new marketing. Give your customers something positive to talk about and they will tell their story to their friends, colleagues and family members. That's marketing – specifically known as Word-of-Mouth (WOM) marketing. It is driven by the interactions your employees have with customers. In the past five or six years, there has been a tremendous focus on customer experience (CX). CX used to refer to customer service only – nothing more. Today, CX has expanded to include every interaction the customer has with any aspect of an organization. That includes the website, packaging of the product, the process the customer goes through, customer service before, during and

after the sale, and much more. It's everything. And, for most companies, the concept of "everything" is daunting.

Let's start at the top. If customer experience really is the new marketing, maybe it's time to rebrand the CMO. I spoke with PwC's Global Chief Experience Officer David Clarke who believes CMOs should replace the M with an X.

"Enlightened companies genuinely understand that experience trumps all, and that sales, marketing and customer engagement are codependent," Clarke said. "Experience is the endgame, not marketing."

In some companies, there is a CXO who works alongside or for the CMO. However, we need to consider that the lines ... [Read Full Article Here](#)

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Tiffani Bova interviews Jonathan Farrington, CEO JF Initiative

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